



SENATOR  
**BILL HARDIMAN**

***E-Hardiman Herald***



*Chair, Families & Human  
Services Committee  
Appropriations Committee;  
Chair, Family Independence  
Agency; Commerce Labor  
& Economic Development;  
Capitol Outlay;  
Higher Education*

*February 27, 2004*

### **Legislative Republicans introduce next JOBS plan**

Senate and House Republicans unveiled the next phase of their comprehensive plan to jumpstart Michigan's stalled economy. The second phase of the legislative JOBS plan – Job Opportunities for Business Success – targets tax relief for businesses that create new jobs and eliminates many of the barriers to entrepreneurial activities.

The JOBS II plan is a broad-ranging call to action on Michigan's job creation front. Specifically, it provides tax relief to businesses that create new jobs, eliminates taxation of federal and state research funds and cuts red-tape nightmares by creating a "bureaucracy buster team" to recommend ways to remove burdensome regulations for businesses. It also helps businesses by simplifying the filing of Michigan Single Business Tax forms and calls on the governor to create a Michigan-Ontario Border Commission to standardize border-related rules and regulations.

### **Michigan apples now adding to Mexican meals**

State leaders celebrated the first batch of Michigan apples heading to Mexico this week. After eight years of trying, Michigan officials have gotten the approval of the Mexican government to export the apples. State officials believe Mexico could become Michigan's largest export market for the fruit, selling up to \$6 million worth in five years. The approval process took time because apple growers had to develop a way to ensure no insects or diseases were exported to Mexico along with the fruit.

### **Underground Railroad Memorial Highway**

A Senate committee voted this week to commemorate Southwest Michigan's historic role in the Underground Railroad by designating sections of US-131 and I-94 as the "Underground Railroad Memorial Highway." As many as 50,000 slaves escaped to freedom through Michigan, many of them through Kalamazoo and Calhoun counties. The section of US-131 runs from U Avenue to West XY Avenue in Kalamazoo County. Senate Bill 241 also designates I-94 from Exit 98 to

Exit 110 in Calhoun County. These sections were chosen because they closely follow a portion of the “Quaker” or “Old Territorial Road” route, one of the most active and well-documented Underground Railroad routes in Michigan.

### **Tax Relief for Economic Expansion**

Senate Republicans passed a package of bills designed to help start-up businesses succeed, strengthening Michigan’s economic future. The 13-bill package — referred to as Tax Relief for Economic Expansion — supports new fast growing, high-tech research companies. TREE will assist these start-up companies by exempting them from property taxes as well as state and city income taxes for the first five years. Businesses qualified as a “start-up” also would be exempt from the Single Business Tax (SBT) – during their first five years – in the years they do not make a profit. The first few years are the toughest for a new venture, with only 50 percent of small businesses succeeding more than four years. Senate Bills 862-873 and 875 will help those who are helping themselves and others to a more stable future in Michigan.

### **Senate approves grandparent visitation bill**

Legislation allowing grandparents to seek visitation orders received unanimous support in the Michigan Senate. A 2003 decision by the Michigan Supreme Court struck down the state’s law allowing grandparents to seek visitation. The law was invalidated because it did not accord sufficient deference to a parent’s decision against such visitation. Senate Bill 727 was crafted to address the concerns raised by the justices in their decision. SB 727, supported by the Michigan Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the Family Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan, now goes before the House for consideration.

### **Preparing for marriage**

Michigan lawmakers announced a broad, bipartisan package of legislation designed to prepare couples for stronger marriages and, in a case of divorce, lessen the negative effect on children. Senators said that by helping increase the number of successful marriages, the number of happy, healthy children would increase as well. Other parts of the legislative package allow a clergy member to continue to legally offer marriage counseling after retirement, require a parenting plan before a divorce is granted; provide a marriage preservation tax credit and promote divorce-effects education programs.

### **Child passenger safety legislation**

In observation of National Child Passenger Safety Week, the Senate introduced a package of bills designed to keep children safer while traveling and penalize parents for endangering their children. The bills would require booster seats for children under 4 feet, 9 inches and between 40 and 80 pounds and would increase fines and points for failure to abide by Michigan’s restraint requirements. The legislation also would provide a waiver of fines or assessments if evidence is produced of acquiring a child safety seat meeting Michigan’s requirements. Motor vehicle accidents remain the leading cause of accidental death for children age 15 years and younger, according to the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning.

## **E-filing**

Hoping to receive your income tax return quickly this year? Then consider e-filing. According to the Michigan Department of Treasury, more than 1.7 million Michigan taxpayers chose to e-file their 2002 income tax returns, making Michigan third in the nation for e-filing. The benefits of e-filing include: receiving your Michigan refund in about seven business days; access to filing 24 hours a day, seven days a week; a significant reduction in errors versus paper returns; and quick confirmation (within three business days) that your return was accepted for processing by the IRS and the State of Michigan. Not only is e-filing quicker and more convenient, but it's also safe and secure. All your confidential information is encrypted -- only you or your tax preparer can see your return. For more information, log on to: <http://www.michigan.gov/treasury>.

## **Tax guides available**

Tax guides for 2003 are now available in Senate offices. The guide offers explanations of many of the terms used in tax forms and helps citizens better understand their tax forms. The booklet contains information on homestead property-tax credits, farmland and open space tax relief, the home-heating credit program, filing property taxes, the Michigan income tax, the Single Business Tax and other tax-related subjects. It also has a few of the more commonly used tax forms. Tax guides are available at many local libraries and post offices, or by contacting my office, toll free, at 1-866-305-2129

## **Diversity has much to offer**

Senator Hardiman has emerged as a spokesman for issues of race because of his unique standing: the only black Republican in the 148-member Michigan Legislature.

He recently submitted an essay to the Grand Rapids Press on the topic of race relations, and it was published on February 15, 2004. To view the essay click on the following link:

[www.senate.michigan.gov/hardiman/news/february2004/Diversity.pdf](http://www.senate.michigan.gov/hardiman/news/february2004/Diversity.pdf)

## **Contact Information**

The Hardiman Herald by Senator Bill Hardiman is designed to provide residents and organizations with a timely update of his activity in Lansing. If you have any questions or do not wish to receive this e-mail, please contact Senator Hardiman's office.

Phone: 1-(866) 305-2129.

Fax: 1-(517) 373-5801.

E-mail: [senbhardiman@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:senbhardiman@senate.michigan.gov).

Mail: P.O. Box 30036 Lansing, Michigan 48909.

Our website address is: [www.billhardiman.com](http://www.billhardiman.com)